

Parashat VaYishlach

The saga of Jacob continues in this week's parashat VaYishlach. VaYishlach means sent. And the story begins with Jacob sending messengers ahead to greet his brother Esau, who swore to kill Jacob when they last parted some twenty years before. Jacob is informed that Esau has a large assembly of men coming toward Jacob, seemingly prepared for battle. Jacob responds with in preparation for the confrontation with strategy, prayer and sending him gifts. The night before he confronts his brother, Jacob spends the night wrestling with the angel and, in the end, has his name changed by God to Israel, meaning the one who wrestles with G-d. The next morning, much to his surprise, the encounter with Esau goes peacefully, they meet, hug and kiss and again they part. Esau returns to home and Jacob settles outside of the city of Shechem. There, Jacob's daughter Dinah is raped, and, in a state of uncontrolled anger, Jacob's sons go on a violent rampage, killing the entire male population of Shechem. At the end of the portion, both Rachel and Isaac die and are buried.

Sibling rivalry. How often do our children fight? How often do they prepare for a battle? How often in our adult lives do we have an issue with a family member or a friend and let years of silence happen because of inner hurt, pride or fear? Many years went by that two brothers could have shared life together, if one may have tried early. In this life that we are given by G-d, let us choose our battles very carefully, let us take responsibility for what we may have done in the battle. Let us negotiate, open our hearts, see G-d in the other, forgive and begin again. It's never easy but often the results outweigh our pride.